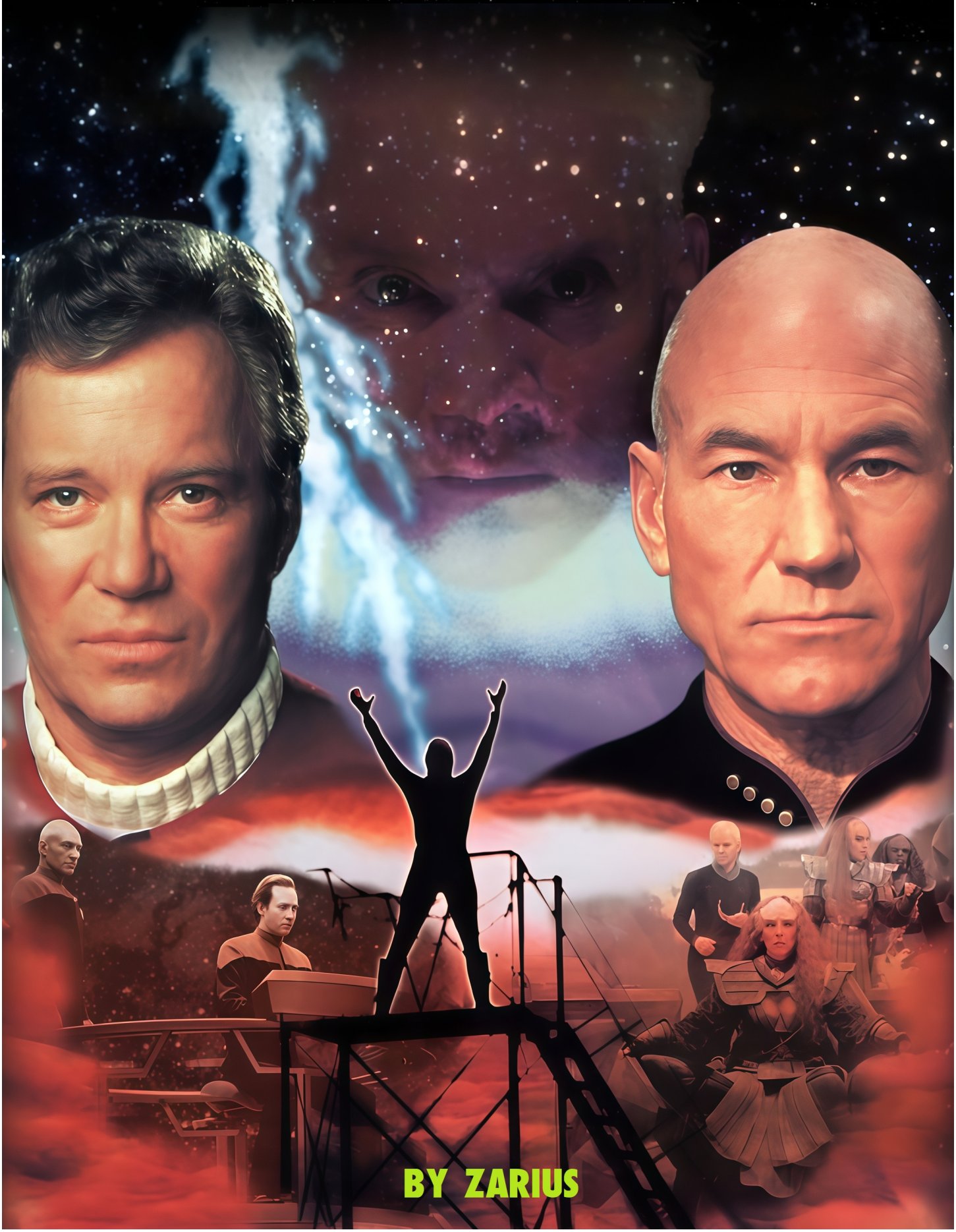
TV GUIDE

STAR TREK
GENERATIONS

THE NOVELIZATION OF THE 'TV CUT' FANEDIT



BY ZARIUS

STAR TREK GENERATIONS:

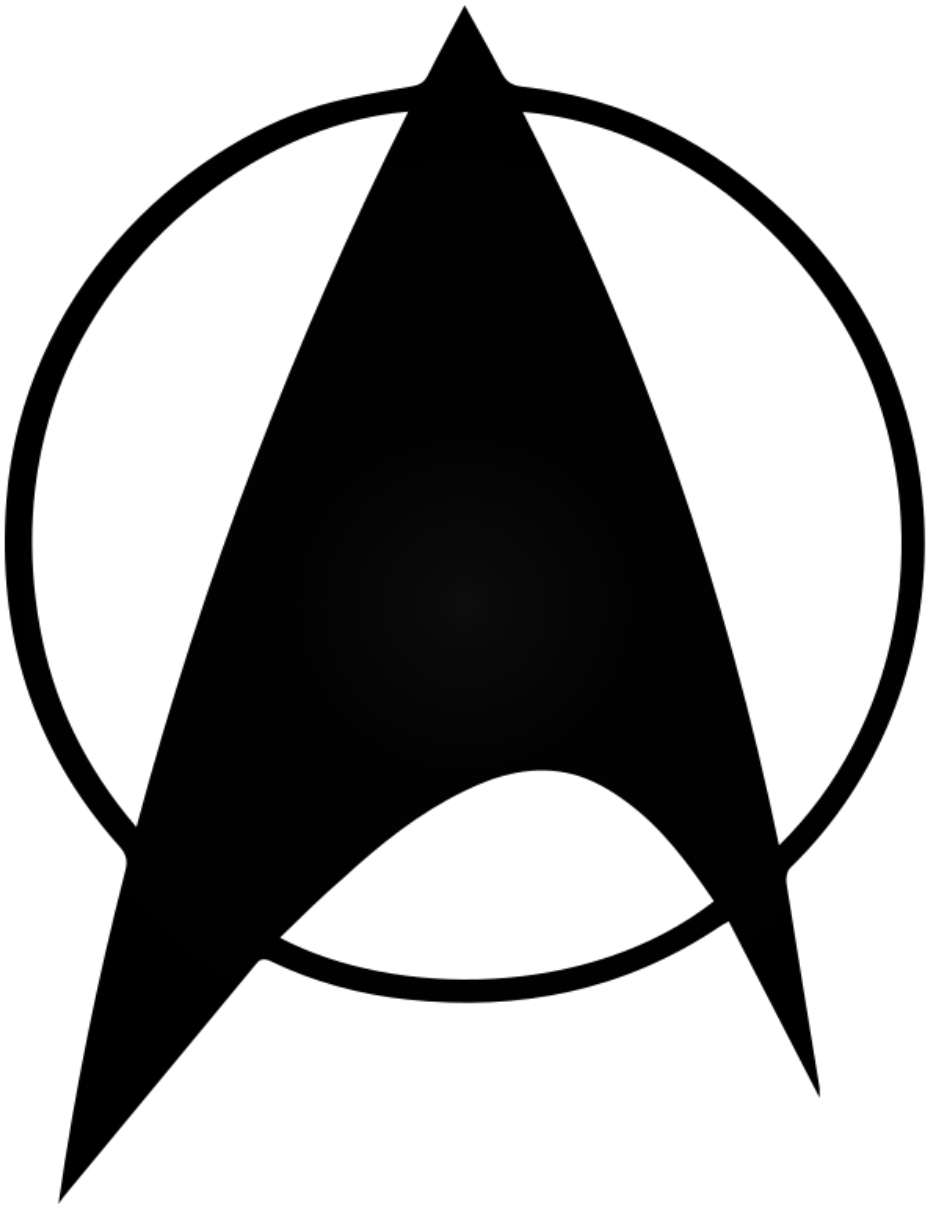
THE TV CUT

Based on a Fanedit By Zarius

&

The ‘Star Trek Generations’ Screenplay By

Ronald D. Moore & Brannon Braga



FOR MUM

FOR DAD

FOR THE BROTHER

FOR THE NEPHEW

FOR ALL MANKIND

FAN EDIT
A COMMUNITY FOR
FANS

A vast and sparkling starfield, a pinpoint of light appeared and started moving through the sea of stars, a small and distant cylindrical object tumbling end over end,

The cylinder tumbling through space grew closer, and closer, it was a bottle of some sort, a champagne bottle.

Dom Perigon, 2265.

The champagne bottle smashed onto the bow of a Federation starship. Excelsior class, sitting in its dock in orbit around Earth.

The name on the hull read *U.S.S Enterprise NCC-1701-B.*

Inside of a large picture window overlooking the starship in its berth were people in Starfleet uniforms, applauding the christening of the ship.

On board the Enterprise, the turbo lift doors slide open to reveal James T. Kirk, Montgomery ‘Scotty’ Scott, and Pavel Chekov.

A bright light shone in their face, this light was being emitted from a futuristic camera with a small bank of lights attached to it.

The camera was a holographic recorder with two lenses and is worn on an operator's head.

There were four journalists clustered in front of the Turbolift, one associated with the camera, while the others were using pads to make notations.

Also clustered around the door was the bridge crew of the *Enterprise-B*, everyone was applauding as Kirk and the others blinked under the bright lights and entered the bridge, they were bombarded with a slew of questions.

Captain John Harriman pushed through the crowd.

“Excuse me, excuse me...there will be plenty of time for questions later...” he said.

The journalists edged away.

“I'm Captain John Harriman. I'd like to welcome you all aboard”

“It's our pleasure” Kirk replied.

Harriman was young, confident, and eager -- this was his first command and he took it *very* seriously.

“I just want you to know how excited we all are to have a group of living legends with us on our maiden voyage. I remember reading about your missions when I was in grade school”

The original Enterprise officers all stopped and gave him a look. Harriman looked slightly embarrassed -- he didn't mean to insult them. But Kirk gave him a little smile, and let it roll off.

“Well... may we have a look around?” Kirk asked.

“Please... please” Harriman agreed delightedly.

Chekov saw someone in the background, recognising her; he yelled her name to get her attention.

“Demora”

As Checkov moved off, Kirk found himself interrogated by a pressuring journalist.

“So, Captain... this is the first Starship Enterprise in thirty years without James T. Kirk in command. How do you feel about that?” The journalist asked.

The Journalist had unknowingly touched a nerve. Kirk's eyes flashed for a moment.

The longer he was on this bridge, lacking any real purpose away from the captain’s chair, the more he realized he didn’t feel good about it at all.

He tried to shrug it off with a smile.

“Just fine. I'm glad to be here to send her on her way...”

He tried to move away from the Journalist, who continued to dog him.

“What have you been doing since you retired?”

“Keeping busy” Kirk tactfully answered.

At this point, Chekov approaches with a young attractive, Asian female Ensign, somewhere in their mid-twenties.

Excuse me, Captain. I'd like you to meet the Helmsman of the Enterprise-B. Ensign Demora Sulu”

“It's a pleasure to meet you, sir. My father's told me some…interesting stories about you” Demora said, shaking Kirk’s hand excitedly.

Kirk was shocked. For a long moment, he stared at her in amazement.

“Your father... Hikaru Sulu is your father?” Kirk asked, surprised.

“Yes, sir” Demora acknowledged happily.

“You met her once before, but she was...”

Chekov held out his hand and indicated a very short height.

“But that wasn't so long ago... it couldn't have been more than...”

“Twelve years, sir” Chekov added.

“Yes... well... congratulations, Ensign. It wouldn't be the Enterprise without a Sulu at the helm” Kirk replied.

Thank you, sir.” Demora shyly replied, before turning to Chekov.

“Here, let me show you the new inertial guidance system” she said, dragging him away.

Demora and Chekov moved off and Kirk looked after them for a long beat. The expression on his face changed from shock to sadness, something was clearly bothering him.

Scotty moved over to Kirk, with a smile on his face.

“Damn fine ship if you ask me...”

But Kirk's mind was still on Demora. He watched her as she moved to the Helmsman's position.

“You know, Scotty... it amazes me” Kirk said.

“And what would that be, sir?” Scotty asked.

“Sulu. When did he find the time for a family?” Kirk pondered.

“It's like you always said -- if something's important enough, you make the time” Scotty replied.

Kirk nodded absently. Scotty realized something...

“So... that's why you've been running around the galaxy like an eighteen-year-old. Finding retirement a little lonely, are we?” Scotty observed.

Kirk gave him a look.

“With that kind of tact, I'm glad you're an engineer and not a Psychiatrist”

Harriman interrupted them.

“Excuse me, gentlemen... if you'll take your seats” Harriman spoke.

The friends found that three chairs been neatly arranged to one side. Scotty, Kirk and Chekov all took their seats. The Journalists take positions on the opposite side of the Bridge.

Harriman moved to the command chair and the rest of the Bridge crew go to their stations.

“Prepare to leave space dock” he instructed.

He turned to where Kirk was seated.

“Captain Kirk, I'd be honoured if you would give the order to get Underway” Harriman requested.

“No... no. Thank you.” Kirk declined.

Harriman insisted.

All eyes were on Kirk, he had little choice. He stood uncomfortably. There was a moment of anticipation.

“Take us out” Kirk said to all.

Everyone broke into applause, Chekov and Scotty included. Kirk sat down in acute embarrassment and annoyance.

The great ship majestically left the dock, and headed out into open space.

A short time later. Harriman turned to his guests.

“Well... we've just cleared the asteroid belt. Our course will take us out beyond Pluto and then back to space dock. Just a quick run around the block If we have time, we'll conduct a few tests of the warp–“

Suddenly, Harriman was interrupted by the communications console as it started to beep. The com officer hit a few commands in response.

“We're picking up a distress call, Captain” he confirmed.

This grabbed everyone's attention, but none more so than James Kirk himself. For this was his calling.

He rose to his feet, ready for action.

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78 Years Later

The Station was a smoking ruin. Consoles flickered, lights were dim, and damage was everywhere.

Only a few minutes had passed since the attack occurred.

William Riker, Beverly Crusher, Commander Worf, and two other security personnel beamed in, phasers and tricorders in hand as well as medical kits.

The room was cramped, there were fallen bulkheads and blown out consoles. The debris made it very difficult to grasp a clear view of the room.

“These blast patterns are consistent with type-three disruptors” Worf observed.

“That narrows it down to Klingon, Breen, or Romulan” Riker replied.

Beverly followed her tricorder readings.

“I’m picking up life signs, about twenty meters ahead”

“That would doubtlessly rule out klingons” Work remarked, Riker giving him a telling look.

“They would not have left anyone alive” Worf continued.

The security guards climbed a nearby ladder while Riker and Worf headed down a dimly-lit corridor.

Riker stopped at two bodies in the hall, he checked them over, both were dead.

There was a sudden bang from across the farthest corner of the room, Worf and Riker swiftly encircled another of the collapsed bulkheads.

“Under here” Worf shouted.

The two men both grabbed hold of a large metal plate, pulled it aside, and began to dig through the debris.

Finally, a hand could be seen grasping from within the rubble.

Riker and Worf worked faster, Worf grabbing the man’s hand and lifted him free.

“It’s alright” Worf assured him, urging him not to struggle.

Worf held the man’s hand as Riker shoved away a final console.

The man blinked a couple of times, he was in a daze.

“I’m Commander William Riker of the *U.S.S Enterprise*”

“Soran” the man wearily responded, giving his name, “Doctor…Tolian Soran”

Soran put his hands to his head, still trying to get his bearings.

“Who attacked you doctor?” Riker asked.

“I’m not sure” Soran replied, “It…it happened so fast…”

A security officer called out.

“Commander, you’d best take a look at this”

Riker and Worf moved to the ladder as Beverly began to examine Soran.

Riker and Worf moved over to two security guards kneeling over a dead body which had been obscured from view. One guard turned over the body, revealing a deceased alien soldier, belonging to a species very familiar to the crew of the *Enterprise*. Worf looked at it in disgust.

“Romulans” he said.

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Shortly after Soran and the remainder of the observatory personnel had been transferred aboard the Enterprise for medical examination,

Doctor Crusher relayed her findings on Soran to Riker and Worf.

“Well, I checked Doctor Soran’s background; he’s an El-aurian, over three hundred years old” she explained, “He lost his entire family when the Borg attacked and destroyed his planet. Soran escaped with a handful of refugees aboard a ship called *The Lakul*, that ship was destroyed by some kind of energy ribbon, but Soran and forty-six others were rescued by the *Enterprise-B*”

This nugget of information from Crusher triggered a dormant nostalgic memory in Riker’s mind, thinking back to the many history lessons he had absorbed during his stint at Starfleet Academy.

“That’s the mission James Kirk was killed” he recalled.

Doctor Crusher nodded and operated on the controls of the computer database.

“I checked the passenger manifest of *The Lakul*, guess who else was on board?”

She lightly tapped a finger on one of the controls and brought up a familiar face, that of the Ten-Forward host Guinan, a well-respected, and mysterious, member of the Enterprise crew.

It wasn’t long before Guinan received a visit to her quarters from Captain Jean-Luc Picard himself.

“Soran’s a name I haven’t heard in a long time” Guinan said as she sat cross legged on the floor, she and Picard locked eyes and talked with an easy familiarity, two old friends who knew one another very well and always had one another’s back.

“You remember him?” Picard asked.

“Oh yes” she replied, standing up and moving across the room, clearly troubled by her memories. She hesitated, and looked off into the middle distance for a few moments. Picard moved towards her.

“Guinan, it’s vitally important that you tell me what you know” Picard insisted.

“Soran cares about only one thing, to find a way back to the Nexus” Guinan replied.

“What’s the nexus?” Picard asked, his curiosity piqued.

“The energy ribbon *The Lakul* isn’t just some random phenomenon travelling through space, it’s a doorway to another place that we call the Nexus, and it’s a place I’ve tried very hard to forget” Guinan revealed.

“What happened to you?” Picard calmly asked, trying his best not to unnerve her and add to her anxiety.

She turned to him and her face was now full of awe and joy as she relived the memory in her mind.

“It was like being inside of joy, as if joy were tangible and you could wrap yourself up in it like a blanket, and never in my entire life have I ever been as content”

There was a long beat between the two of them as Picard absorbed her words.

“But…then you were beamed away” he began.

“I was *ripped* away, I didn’t want to leave, none of us did” she said, trying to contain a build of anger as the memory became too raw and real.

“All I could think about was getting back, I didn’t care what I had to do” she continued, moving to the window and looked out at the stars before her.

“When I eventually realized what I wanted was impossible, I learned to live with that, but if Soran is still as obsessed as I had been, he may prove to be a very, *very*, dangerous man”

Picard turned to leave, thanking her for her cooperation.

The next order of business was to confront Soran.

Picard made his way to Ten-Forward. It was bustling with patrons and activity,

As Picard walked through it and headed towards a table positioned at the window, Doctor Soran sat there, fingers tapping frantically on the table, he had been waiting some time.

“Doctor Soran?” Picard spoke, alerting him to his presence.

“Yes, yes, Captain, thankyou for coming” Soran said offering a handshake; Picard obliged, and took a seat at the table.

Soran had an imposing physical presence, but at that precise moment he seemed very much the eccentric scientist all too consumed with his work. Picard waved away a waiter.

“Nothing for me, thanks” Picard said. Brusque, he turned back to Soran.

“I understand there’s something urgent you wish to discuss with me” Picard asked.

“Yes, I need to return to the observatory immediately, I must continue a critical experiment I was running on the Amargoza star”

Picard’s reaction was a little impatient, this didn’t sound all that imperative to him.

“Doctor, we’re still conducting an investigation into the attack, now once we’ve completed our work, we’ll be happy to allow you and your fellow scientists back aboard the observatory, but until then-“

“Timing is very important in my experiment” Soran softly, and chillingly, spoke.

He had not been left at all impressed with the roadblocks being put up in front of him by the Captain.

“If it is not completed within the next few hours, years of critical research will be lost” he continued.

“We’re doing the best we can. Now, if you’ll excuse me…” Picard snapped, he moved to stand, but Soran reached out and gently, but firmly, grabbed him by the arm.

The unexpected physical contact and look of intensity in Soran’s eyes stopped Picard dead in his tracks.

“They say time is the fire in which we burn” Soran spoke cryptically.

“Right now Captain, my time is running out. We leave so many things unfinished in our lives, I’m sure you can understand”

For some reason Soran’s words had struck a deep chord within Picard.

He looked away from Soran’s compelling gaze, and thought to himself for a long moment. When he finally spoke, his voice was barely above that of a whisper.

“I’ll see what I can do” he said.

Picard walked away without a word, all before Soran could thank him. Soran looked after him with relief, then pulled out an antique pocket watch and opened it.

He stared at the watch for a moment, and then snapped it shut and headed for the opposite exit from the one Picard took, until he suddenly stopped and reacted with shock and surprise at the sight of someone in close proximity to him.

A dark look crossed his face; he was disturbed at the sight of Guinan, who was returning to work.

Soran quickly turned and made a swift exit.

Guinan began to sense something, as though someone was watching her. She looked in the direction where Soran had been standing, only to find no one was there.

She shook off the feeling and went back to work.

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A short time later, Worf approached Riker to discuss another matter in connection with the attack on the observatory.

“One of the deceased Romulans was in possession of a tricorder. We analyzed the it’s sensor logs and found they were scanning for signature particles of a compound called Trilithium” he explained.

“Trilithium?” a curious Riker replied.

“An experimental compound the Romulans have been developing” Worf continued.

“In theory, a Trilithium-based explosive would be thousands of times more powerful than an anti-matter weapon, but they never found a way to stabilize it” he added

“Why were they looking for it on a Federation colony? It doesn’t make any sense” Riker replied, struggling to comprehend the conundrum.

He then paused, and considered an option before putting it into the ether and from there, into effect.

“Have Geordi and Data go over to the observatory with the next away team, tell them to scan the place for any sign of Trilithium” he instructed.

“Aye sir” Worf replied, and departed.

***

In his quarters, Picard was seated at his desk, staring at an open Photo Album.

It had been opened to a page showing Picard’s brother, his wife, and their young son living in France.

There was an unsipped cup of tea nearby on the desk, but Picard had ignored it, far too immersed in the nostalgia of these cherished family photographs, classical music was playing in the background.

The door to his quarters chimed, though Picard didn’t react right away.

The door chimed again and this time it got his attention.

“Come” he said.

The door opened and the Enterprise councillor Deanna Troi entered.

She was cautious, she knew something was deeply troubling the Captain, but she wasn’t going to force the issue, she would let him take the lead.

“Councillor, what can I do for you?” Picard asked.

“Actually, I’m here to see if there’s something I can do for you, you seem to be very distracted lately” Troi replied.

Although Picard tried to keep it casual, Troi could tell there was definitively something lurking just beneath the surface.

“Oh, just family matters” he said, glancing back at the photographs.

“You’ve never met my brother and his wife have you?” he asked.

Troi moved closer to him and examined the album.

“No” she said.

“Robert could be quite impossible” Picard began, “Pompus, arrogant, he always had to have the last word, but he mellowed somewhat in his later years, I thought we could all get to San Francisco, Rene’s always wanted to see Starfleet Academy”

Troi looked at the boy in the album.

“Rene? Your nephew?”

Picard nodded.

He smiled fondly, but Troi could sense that an inner tension building.

“Yes, he’s so unlike his father, imagnitive, a dreamer. He always reminded me of myself at that age”

He laughed softly, but there was a hollow and empty quality to the laugh and there was no visible joy left in his eyes, Troi moved to him quietly.

“Captain…what happened?” she asked.

Picard took a moment, but he couldn’t look away from her.

He tried to keep his voice steady, but Troi could see the depth of the pain he was feeling.

“Robert and Rene, they’re dead, they burned to death in a fire” he tearfully revealed.

Troi reacted to the news as Picard moved away from her and stared out of the observation window.

“I’m so sorry” Troi replied.

“It’s alright, these things happen” Picard responded.

“Captain, it’s not alright” Troi insisted, “And the sooner you realize that, the sooner you can begin to come to terms with what’s happened”

There was a beat.

“I know that” Picard replied, “But right now it’s not me I’m concerned with, It’s my nephew, I can’t stop thinking about him, about all the experiences he’ll never have now, going to the academy, and reading books…falling in love, children of his own, that’s all gone now”

“I had no idea he meant that much to you” Troi replied.

“In a way, he was as close as I ever came to having a child of my own” Picard admitted.

Troi’s eyes were fixed on the family photo album, she reached over and flipped through the pages for a moment, there were many photos inside, from many periods in time.

“Your family history is very important to you isn’t it?” she asked.

“Ever since I was a little boy, I remember hearing about the family line” Picard spoke, “The Picards that fought at Trafalgar, the Picards that settled on the first Martian colony, when my brother married and…had a son..”

Picard hesitated, this was very difficult for him.

“You felt it was no longer your responsibility to carry on the family line” Troi realized.

Picard nodded.

“Yes, exactly, my brother had shouldered that burden, I always took fact in the fact that with him around, the family would go on, but now there will be no more Picards”

Picard moved back to the photo album and opened it at the last page, before flipping through the remainder of it, they were all blank. A quiet rage overtook him as he realized what had happened.

Suddenly, a blinding burst of light from outside the window washed into the room. Troi and Picard rushed to the window and shielded their eyes against the glare.

Riker’s voice echoed over the comm. System.

“Senior officers report to the bridge. All hands to duty stations”

Picard and Troi entered the bridge of the *Enterprise* via a turbolift, Riker and Worf were at their stations. The Amargos star was displayed on the bridge view screen, getting darker by the second.

More flaming debris was being slowly ejected into space.

“Report” Picard requested.

“A quantum implosion has occurred within the Amargosa star” Riker explained, “ All nuclear fusion is breaking down.

“How is that possible?” Picard asked

It was now Worf’s turn to contribute.

“Sensor records show a solar probe was launched from the observatory a few moments ago”

“The star's going to collapse in amatter of minutes” Riker added.

Something beeped on Worf's console.

“Sir, the implosion has produced a level twelve shock wave” he revealed.

“Level twelve? That'll destroy everything in this system” a startled Troi realized.

“Transporter room to Bridge. I can't locate Commander La Forge or Mister Data, sir” rang out a com link from the transporter room, updating the bridge crew on the away team that had beamed over to the observatory.

“Did they return to the ship?” Riker asked, turning to Worf.

“No, sir. They are not aboard” Word answered.

“How long until the shock wave hits the observatory?” Picard asked.

“Four minutes, forty seconds” Worf replied.

Picard looked at Riker, who then quickly headed for the turbolift. He requested that Worf follow him.

The star was almost entirely dark. Radiating out from the star was a huge shock wave- a rapidly growing sphere of energy.

Soran was standing at a console watching a graphic depiction of the star's collapse on a monitor when the door suddenly opened. Soran whirled around and fired his phaser at Riker and Worf. They dove for cover just
outside the room

“What the hell's he doing?” an enraged Riker asked.

Worf dodged another phaser blast and saw Geordi lying unconscious on the deck. Data was nowhere to be seen.

“Enterprise to Commander Riker, you have two minutes left” Picard urged from over the coms link. Riker yelled over to Soran

“You hear that Soran? There’s a level twelve shock wave coming. We've got to get out of here!”

Soran’s only answer was another phaser blast.

Aboard the *Enterprise*, Ensign Hayes was at Tacical, an alarm suddenly beeped on his operating console.

“Sir. A Klingon Bird of Prey is decloaking off the port bow” he revealed.

“What?” a startled Picard asked.

Sure enough, an old-style Klingon Bird of Prey swiftly decloaked near the observatory.

Soran was continuing to shoot at Riker and Worf. Riker suddenly noticed Data was huddled in a corner of the room, cowering in fear.

“Data! See if you can get to Geordi!” Riker instructed.

Data looked up at him with a terrified look on his face.

“I... cannot, sir. I believe I am... afraid”

He had recently installed his creator Doctor Soong’s emotion chip into his central processor and it had been giving him no end of trouble.

Suddenly, Soran's communicator beeped. Soran reached down and grabbed the unconscious Geordi by the collar and the two of them dematerialized.

The Bird of Prey cloacked and vanished.

“Transporter room to Bridge. I have the Away Team aboard, sir” confirmed the chief operator to the bridge over the comm. Link.

“Helm, warp one, engage” Picard swiftly instructed.

The Enterprise warped away just as the shock wave reached the observatory and vaporized it in a ferocious explosion.

***

Inside of the worn, beaten down Klingon ship, patched in several places, were Lursa and B'Etor, representatives of the House of Duras, aggressive, seductive, and *very* dangerous.

Several male Klingons manned the various stations.

The sisters stared at the image of the devastated sun and were awe struck.

Soran entered the Bridge. His expression dark and angry. He was clearly not a prisoner here and he strided up to the sisters.

"You've done it, Soran" B'Etor spoke, praising him. But without warning, Soran hit B'Etor squarely in the jaw, knocking her back over a console.

Several Klingons leapt to their feet, drawing their weapons, but B'Etor holds up a hand as she got to one knee.

She dabbed a trickle of blood at the corner of her mouth... her expression angry and threatening.

"I hope for your sake that you are initiating a mating ritual" she said, caressing Soran's cheek with the tips of her blood-drenched fingernails.

"You got careless. The Romulans came looking for their missing trilithium" Soran explained.

"Impossible. We left no survivors on their outpost" Lursa insisted.

"They knew it was aboard the observatory" Soran further explained, "If the Enterprise hadn't intervened, they would have found it"

"But they didn't find it... and now we have a weapon of unlimited power" Lursa said, seeing

the bright side of things.

"I have the weapon, Lursa. And if you ever want me to give it to you, I advise you to be a little more careful in the future" Soran insisted.

B'Etor grabbed Soran and held a knife to his throat.

"Perhaps we are tired of waiting" she quietly hissed with poison in her voice.

Soran was unfazed by this threat.

"Without my research... the trilithium is worthless... as are your plans to reconquer the Klingon Empire"

Lursa reached out and calmly pushed her sister's knife away.

"Set course for the Veridian system. Maximum warp" Soran instructed.

A Klingon Guard entered, dragging the unconscious Geordi.

“What shall I do with this?” the guard asked.

Soran moved toward Geordi, a grim look on his face.

“Bring him with me. I need some answers from Mr. La Forge”

***

Back aboard the Enterprise, Riker and Worf were on the move down the corridors of the ship discussing the previous few hours.

“I have spoken to the Klingon High Council, sir. They identified the Bird of Prey as belonging to the Duras sisters” Worf revealed.

Riker was surprised.

“Lursa and B'Etor...? This doesn't make any sense, a renowned stellar physicist somehow uses a trilithium probe to destroy a star, kidnaps Geordi... and escapes with a pair of Klingon renegades... Why? What the hell's going on?”

The two men entered the interior of sickbay. Beverly was finishing up an examination of Data, he was sitting on a bio-bed, scanning himself with a tricorder.

“How is he?” Riker asked.

“It looks like a power surge fused the emotional chip into his neural net” Beverly explained.

“Will that be a danger to him?” Word inquired.

“I don't think so” Beverly answered, “The chip still seems to be working. I'd feel better if I could take a closer look, but I can't remove it without completely dismantling his cerebral conduit”

Riker turned to Data.

“Looks like you're stuck with emotions for a while. How do you feeling?”

“I am quite... preoccupied with concern about Geordi” Data revealed, still feeling tense and awkward.

“We all are, Data. But we're going to get him back” Riker assured him.

“I hope so, sir” Data replied.

“That’s the spirit, now, if you feel you’re fit enough for duty, the Captain is requesting that you join him in Stellar Cartography”

Data made his way over to the deck that housed Stellar Cartography, a room filled with exotic-looking devices, sensors and computers which handled the enormous task of tracking the ship's position in space.

The monitors around the room display various diagrams of the energy ribbon.

Data took a seat at a computer console which had a great deal of complex information on the screen. Picard was standing next to him.

“Guilt. It is a most unpleasant feeling” Data admitted, reflecting once more on his helplessness in keeping Geordi safe from harm.

Picard smiled at him.

“Courage can be an emotion too, Data” he said.

The computers Data operated on swiftly finished its calculations and the console beeped.

Data worked at the console. Information appeared on screen.

“According to our current information, the destruction of the Amargosa star has had the following effects in this sector: gamma emissions have increased by five percent... the starship *Bozeman* was forced to make a course correction... a research project on Gorik Four was halted due to increased neutrino particles...-“

Picard interrupted him.

“Wait. *The Bozeman*... why did it change course?”

“The destruction of the Amargosa star has altered the gravitational forces throughout the sector, any ship passing through this region will have to make a minor course correction” Data explained.

Picard was starting to get an idea.

“Where is the ribbon now?” he asked.

Data moved to a larger table and set to work, an elaborate map of the galaxy sprang up on the ceiling of the room, a blinking dot displayed the position of the ribbon.

“This is its current position” Data revealed.

“Can you project its course?” Picard asked.

Data worked the console, a red line moved to form an arc through the star field.

Picard examined the display for a moment and nodded.

He was now a little excited, and *on* to something...

“Enhance grid A-nine” Picard instructed.

The display now zoomed into a single sector.

The red line cut through the sector.

“Where was the Amargosa star?” Picard asked.

Data highlighted a star near the star line.

“Now... you said the gravitational forces in this sector have been altered...could that also affect the course of the ribbon?” Picard asked.

Data gave it a think, and then answered.

“I believe so”

The holographic display changed again. The red line representing the course of the ribbon now shifted to the right away from the Amargosa star's position.

Picard was beginning to realize what's going on.

“That's what Soran's doing... he's changing its course. But why try to alter its path, why not simply fly into it with a ship?” Picard pondered.

“Our records show that every ship which has approached the ribbon has either been destroyedor severely damaged” Data answered.

Picard thought about this... then had a flash of insight.

“He can't go to the ribbon... so he's trying to make the ribbon come to him. Data, is it going to pass near any M-Class planets?”

“Yes, sir. There are two in the Veridian system” Data revealed.

The display zoomed in on a star very close to the ribbon's path, there was a solar system with a single star and four planets.

The red line moved directly through the system, passing very closely to the third. Picard eyed that planet and pointed to it.

“It's very close to Veridian Three... but not close enough...”

Picard's mind was going a mile a minute, he suddenly had a horrible realization.

“Data, what would happen to the ribbon’s path if he destroyed the Veridian star itself?” he asked.

On the display, the Veridian star suddenly darkened and went out.

The red line shifted slightly until it made an exact intersection with the third planet. The two men both reacted to this sight; they’re both aware of just how serious this was.

“That's where he's going” Picard chillingly uttered.

“It should be noted, sir, that the collapse of the Veridian star would produce a shock wave

similar to the one we observed at Amargosa” Data revealed.

Picard eyed the graphic with a sense of dread.

“Are any of the planets uninhabited?” he asked.

“Veridian Three is uninhabited, but Veridian Four supports a pre- industrial humanoid society” Data revealed.

“Population?” Picard asked.

“Approximately two hundred thirty million”

A grimmer Picard headed for the exit, a sense of urgency and determination in his every move.

“Picard to bride, red alert. Set a course for the Veridian system, maximum warp.”

***

Aboare the Bird of Prey, Lursa and B'Etor watched as Soran toyed with Geordi La Forge's visor, making adjustments to it with an instrument.

"Did you get anything else from the human?"

"No, his heart wasn't into it"

"We have entered the orbit of Veridian Three" confirmed the helm.

"Prepare to transport me to the surface" Soran said, handing B'Etor a small computer chip.

This contains all the information you'll need to build a trilithium weapon. It's been coded. Once I'm safely to the surface, I'll transmit the decryption sequence to you...not before."

"Mistress! -- a Federation starship is entering the system!" the helm reported.

"On viewer" Lursa ordered.

The view screen soon displayed the *Enterprise* on impulse power entering the system.

"They are hailing us"

"On speakers" demanded Lursa.

Over the coms, they heard Picard's voice.

"Klingon vessel. We know what it is you're doing, and we will destroy any probe launched toward the Veridian star"

Soran's expression darkened.

"What do we do?" B'Etor asked.

Soran checked his watch.

"I think it's time we gave Mister La Forge his sight back" he said.

***

As the *Enterprise* came into orbit of Veridian Three. The planet's star was visible.

On the bridge, Picard was pacing. Riker, Data, Worf, Troi at their stations. The ship was at Red Alert.

I have to find a way to get to Soran...” said Picard.

An alarm went off on Worf's console.

“Captain, Klingon vessel decloaking directly ahead” reported Worf.

On the view screen, the Bird of Prey decloaked.

“They are hailing” said Worf.

On screen” Picard ordered.

On the view screen, Lursa and B'Etor appeared.

“Captain. What an unexpected pleasure” said Lursa.

“Lursa, I wish an audience with Soran” Picard requested.

I'm afraid the Doctor is no longer aboard our ship” Lursa revealed.

“Then I will beam down to his location. Just give us his coordinates” offered Picard.

“The Doctor values his privacy. He would be quite... *upset* if an away team interrupted him” Lursa explained.

Very well... I'll beam to your ship and you can transport me to Soran…” Picard proposed.

“Sir, you can't trust them. They'll kill you just like they did Geordi” Riker said.

Lursa and B'Etor exchanged a glance.

We did not kill your Engineer. He's been... our guest” Lursa replied.

“Then return him” Riker demanded.

“In exchange for what?” Lursa asked.

“Me... If you would allow me to speak to Soran”

B’Etor consulted with her sister

“The Captain would make a much more valuable hostage”

Lursa turned to Picard.

“We'll consider it a prisoner exchange”

“Agreed” said Picard

The transmission ended. Picard headed for the Turbolift.

“Number One, you have the Bridge. Have Doctor Crusher meet me in Transporter Room Three”

Arriving at his destination, Picard stood on the transporter platform. Crusher and Nurse Ogawa stood nearby, the transporter chief tirelessly worked the console.

“Receiving the coordinates, Captain” he said.

“Energize” ordered Picard

Picard was beamed away, and, at the same instant, Geordi materialized. Beverly and Ogawa rushed to his aid, pulled out their tricorders and scanned him. Geordi was conscious, and was again wearing his visor.

On the surface of Veridian III, there was a large plateau ringed with trees and underbrush. A single rock face juts upward, forming a backdrop for the plateau.

Against the rock face, a large scaffolding had been erected, planks and beams forming a complex structure, ladders connected each level, it led to a narrow ledge a dozen meters above.

Picard materialized on the plateau.

He looked around. strange animals and birds could be heard.

He turned and saw Soran standing nearby, calmly looking at his pocket watch. Soran soon put the watch away.

“You must think I'm quite the madman” Soran said.

“The thought had crossed my mind...” Picard dryly replied.

“The only possible reason you're here is because you're not entirely confident you can shoot down my probe after all. So you've come to dissuade me from my horrific plan, good luck”

Soran turned his back on Picard and walked away.

Picard takes a step to follow him only to be jolted backward by a large force field which briefly flashed into view.

“Careful, I wouldn’t want to see you get hurt” Soran replied.

***

Lursa and B'Etor were watching the view screen of their ship with irritated expressions.

They had been very patient.

Soran's tampering with the visory had given them access to Geordi's vision, giving them an insight into the day to day lives of the repulsive Enterprise crew, but they were only interested in learning one thing, and it was taking them forever to be educated.

It seemed as though Geordi was the only engineer on the ship who never actually went to engineering.

Geordi rounded a corner and, to the eager relief of the Duras Sisters, eventually did approach the much desired deck.

The sisters leaned forward.

"Finally!" Lursa said.

Geordi began talking to an engineer named Farrel.

"I'd like to run a Level Three diagnostic on the port plasma relays. I think one of the generators is fluctuating" Farrel requested.

"Okay, let's do it" Geordi said.

They both moved to the consoles.

On the left side of the Duras' view screen was the large cutaway view of the *Enterprise*.

Lursa suddenly reacted to something on the screen.

"That's it! Replay from time index four-two-nine" she instructed.

The image on their monitor ran backward for a moment and then froze. On the screen, they saw several of the monitors in Engineering. On the left side of the screen was the large cutaway view of the *Enterprise*.

Lursa touched the diagram.

"Magnify this section and enhance" she said.

B'Etor operated the console. The picture zoomed in and sharpened it's focus on the display. There were several blocks of numbers and text visible. Lursa studied the image with precision.

"Their shields are operating on a modulation of two-five-seven point four..." she said, hardly containing her callous joy.

The sisters exchanged euphoric glances, then moved toward the command area.

“Adjust our torpedo frequency to match - two-five-seven point four!” B’Etor instructed.

The two sisters smiled eagerly.

“Sir, I am detecting an anomalous subspace reading in main engineering” reported Data, “It may be –“

The ship was suddenly rocked hard, alarms went off on the bridge.

The Klingon ship fired four photon torpedoes at the *Enterprise*. The torpedoes passed directly through the ship's shields and hit the hull directly.

“They have found a way to penetrate our shields” reported Worf.

Lock phasers and return fire!” Riker ordered.

The *Enterprise* fired at the Bird of Prey, but the phaser shots were stopped by the Klingon shields.

The Bird of Prey returned fire. The shot carved a jagged tear in the *Enterprise's* hull.

As before. The ship was jolted again... the Con console exploded, killing it’s operative

“Deanna, take the helm. Get us out of orbit” Riker ordered.

Troi rushed to the Con

The *Enterprise* turned and left orbit, but the Klingon ship was right on top of them, it fired several more shots at the defenceless starship.

“Hull breach on decks thirty-one through thirty-five” reported Data.

There was another jolted The bridge lights flickered. The situation was becoming more and more desperate.

“Worf, that's an old Klingon ship. What do we know about it? Are there any weaknesses?” Riker asked with urgency.

The ship jolted again.

“It is a Class D-twelve Bird of Prey. They were retired from service because of defective plasma coils” Worf revealed.

“Plasma coils, is there any way we can use that to our advantage?” Riker asked.

“I do not see how, the plasma coil is part of their cloaking device...” Worf elaborated.

There was a sudden explosion on the upper levels of Engineering.

“Coolant leak, we’ve got a coolant leak, get everybody out of here” Geordi said.

As everyone fled Engineering, Geordi patched through to the bridge on his com badge.

“Bridge, we’ve got a new problem, we’re five minutes from a warp core breach”

Riker suddenly got an inspiration as the bridge was further rocked.

“Mr. Data, could we access the defective coil and trigger their cloak?” Riker asked.

Data considered this, then became more excited as he realized that the strategy could pay off.

“Perhaps. Yes! If we sent a low-level ionic pulse, it might reset the coil and engage the cloaking systems”

“As their cloak begins to engage, their shields will drop” Worf explained.

“Right. And they'll be vulnerable for at least two seconds. Data, lock onto that plasma coil” Riker instructed

No problem” Data said quite confidently, and went to work.

“Worf, prepare a spread of photon torpedoes. We'll have to hit them the *instant* they begin to cloak”

“Aye, sir” Worf acknowledged.

We're only going to get one shot at this. Target their primary reactor. With any luck, their warp core should implode”

The Enterprise rolled and turned back toward the planet, it tried to get away from the Klingon ship, but the Bird of Prey followed its every move.

“I have accessed their coil frequency... initiating ionic pulse...” Data announced.

The ship was hit again, a console exploded.

The energy ribbon could be seen in the distant sky of Veridian III, a bizarre snake of colour streaking across the deep blue sky.

Time was almost up.

There was a thunderous roar as the launcher fired the probe into the sky.

The plateau was suddenly quiet as the probe struck toward the distant sun and disappeared from view. Picard got to his knees, and stared after the probe shocked.

He had failed.

They watched the sun for a silent moment, and waited.

The sun began to darken and collapse.

Things darkened as the sun goes out...and night fell on the planet.

Soran, a look of profound elation on his face, made his way to the top of the scaffolding and looked out into the sky.

Picard got to his feet and stared at the onrushing ribbon, the wind whipping up on the plateau.

He backed away at the sight, coming to a stop with his back against the scaffolding.

There was nowhere to run.

As the ribbon of energy tore across the scene in a terrifying torrent of light and sound, there was a blinding flood of red light, then, suddenly, the ribbon was gone, and so were Picard and Soran.

The plateau was strangely and utterly silent after the passage of the ribbon, even the birds had stopped chirping in the trees.

A huge shockwave from the decimated star suddenly hit the planet and it violently blew apart into fiery debris.

* * *

Picard found himself standing outside a rustic, but architecturally, striking house with spectacular views in the Canadian Rockies.

A hawk was circling overhead, making a crying sound.

The air was cold, frigid -- Picard could see his breath.

Picard was just starting to adjust to this sudden change in location when he heard the sound of wood being chopped.

From around the corner of the house Picard moved to look around the corner and saw a familiar, and famous Starfleet captain, any 24 Century Starfleet officer with access to the history records would recognise him from anywhere.

“James T. Kirk” Picard said, taken aback.

He was still in his uniform and looks exactly as he did the last time anyone had seen him on the bridge of the *Enterprise-B.*

He was vigorously chopping wood with an axe, and was enjoying himself, lost in the sheer pleasure of the manual labour.

He'd never felt this good in his life, and there was no trace of back pain or any other ailment.

Kirk paused, looked up at the strange man before him. His expression is wondrous, almost child-like. Kirk is immersed in the sensual feeling of the Nexus. It was a dream that had over-powered him.

“Beautiful day” he said joyously.

“Yes... yes, it is” Picard said in agreement.

Kirk pointed to a nearby log on the woodpile.

“Do you mind?” he asked.

It took Picard a beat before he realizes that Kirk wanted him to put the log on the chopping block for him.

Picard placed the log on the block and Kirk gave it a vigorous chop with the axe.

“Captain, do you realize what-“ Picard began, but Kirk interrupted as he sensed something.

“Wait a second. I think something's *burning*”

Picard followed his look to see smoke billowing out of one of the windows of the house. Kirk rushed into the house, and Picard followed.

Kirk rushed in.

The kitchen's decor was 19th century with a few 23rd Century touches, copper pans, and an antique stove mixed comfortably with computer consoles and Starfleet paraphernalia.

Picard hesitated in the doorway, a little unsure about rushing into some stranger's house.

Kirk yanked a burning frying pan of food off the stove, it was *very* hot.

He quickly set it down near the sink; he waved the smoke away with his hand.

“Looks like someone was cooking eggs...” he said.

He beckoned Picard over.

“Come on in, it's all right. This is my house -- or at least it used to be, I sold it years ago”

Picard came in and tried tries to orient Kirk to what was going on.

“I’m Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the starship…*Enterprise*”

Before Kirk could react to this remark, an antique clock on a shelf chimed as it struck the hour.

Kirk moved to the shelf and looks at the clock in surprise and, entranced by this experience, beginning to connect with things and memories from his past.

“This clock... I gave this clock to Bones...” he said.

Picard pressed on.

“I'm from what you would consider the future...the twenty-fourth century”

Kirk hears what Picard is saying, but was more interested in the sights and sounds around him.

A dog could be heard barking just outside the door, greeting Kirk with enthusiasm.

“Butler!” Kirk said, affectionately.

He turned to Picard.

“How can he be here? He’s been dead seven years”

They were still looking around the kitchen when suddenly a woman’s voice from somewhere upstairs that stopped Kirk in his tracks.

“Come on, Jim, I'm starving. How long are you going to be rattling around that kitchen?”

“That’s Antonia” Kirk said in amazement.

Kirk looked at the food on the stove.

He was beginning to realize something.

He glanced at Picard.

“Wait a minute...the future... what are you talking about? This is the *past*...”

Kirk moved to a drawer and opens it. Inside was a horseshoe with a tiny red bow tied to it.

This confirmed things for Kirk.

He picked up the horseshoe.

“This is nine years ago... the day I told her I was going back to Starfleet...”

Kirk was swept up in the moment, overwhelmed by memories, sensations, and feelings.

He went back to the frying pan and looked at the contents with a sudden burst of recognition.

“These were Ktarian eggs – her favourite. I was cooking them to soften the blow...and I gave her this” he said, the horseshoe still clutched in his hand.

Picard stepped in.

I know how real this must seem to you, but it's not. This isn't really your house. We've both been caught up in some sort of temporal nexus”

“So why aren’t you affected?” Kirk asked.

“Excuse me?” Picard replied,

“Think about it, I have everything I’ve ever desired here, a chance to start over, do things right from day one, surely there’s a time, a place that you belong to right? Why aren’t you with your loved ones?”

“Because….a good friend of us both, told me once that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one” Picard replied, drawing on nostalgia of a different sort for Kirk and hoping it would reach him.

Kirk's mind was clearly elsewhere, he moved to the stove and tossed out the ruined eggs.

He cracked open two new eggs on the skillet and began preparing a breakfast.

“How long have you been here?” Picard asked.

Kirk began to season the eggs and stir them.

I don't know. I was on the Enterprise-B...they got into some turbulence trouble and I had to reroute the deflector control, keep stirring these, will you?"

Kirk moves to a cabinet and begins putting plates on a breakfast tray.

Picard was getting a little impatient, but stirred the eggs anyway.

"I was in the Deflector room rerouting systems when the bulkhead was cut in two by a pillar of energy, then it disappeared, right in front of me...next thing I know then I was out there chopping wood"

Kirk took the pan of eggs back from Picard.

"History records that you died saving the Enterprise-B from an energy ribbon seventy eight years ago..."

But Picard's words were almost alien to Kirk, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. He began serving the eggs onto the plates and grabbed a small vase of flowers to put on the tray.

"So you're telling me this is the twenty-fourth century... and I'm dead?" Kirk asked with amusement.

"Not exactly, as I said, this is some kind of..." Picard began, but Kirk cut him off.

"Temporal nexus... yeah, I heard you" Kirk said, frowning at the tray.

"Something's missing..."

Then he remembered and turned to look at a nearby toaster, as if on cue, two slices of toast pop out. Kirk grinned and puts the toast on the plates. Kirk picks up the tray and heads for the door.

"Captain, I need your help. I want you to leave the Nexus with me" Picard requested.

Kirk got out of the kitchen and Picard followed, Kirk and Picard were now both on the move as Kirk headed for a staircase.

"I have to go back to a planet called Veridian III and stop a madman from destroying a star; there are millions of lives at stake"

Kirk began to climb the stairs.

His mind drifted towards the woman he was serving breakfast to. Antonia. He wanted to march straight into their bedroom and propose, put Starfleet, duty and obligation well and truly behind him.

But then his mind also drifted further back, to the fateful rescue mission aboard the *Enterprise-B* with which he gave his life, and back to a familiar conversation with Scotty, who told him that if something was truly more important to him, then he would have to make the time for it.

“This time things are going to be different” he said.

He went through a bedroom door and closed it behind him. Picard glanced around the room. Determined, he marched up the stairs after Kirk, grasps the doorknob, opened it and stepped through the door.

There was a blinding flash of light and Picard found himself on the surface of Veridian III, completely intact once more, as if the nexus ribbon had never graced it. Above him, the sky was blue and clear.

He also realized he was now standing on the opposite end of the force field that had obstructed him.

The probe launcher directly in front of him, Soran was preoccupied elsewhere.

This was Picard’s chance.

But where was Kirk?

***

Back aboard the *Enterprise D*, Riker moved to the Captain's chair. He presses a button on the armchair console; a unique and urgent alarm was heard throughout the ship.

Crewmembers and civilians rushed through the corridors, Geordi directed people towards the correct doorways.

Parents grabbed their children and headed towards the corridor. Beverly and a nurse grabbed a wounded crewmember and carefully escorted him from sickbay.

People scrambled through the Jeffries Tubes and out into a Corridor.

Geordi was the last man through the hatch.

He turned and manually shut the hatch behind him.

Geordi hit his com badge.

“That's it, Bridge, we're all Out!”

Back on the bridge, Data updated Riker on the status of the warp core.

“One minute to warp core breach”

“Begin separation sequence” instructed to Troi, “Full impulse power once we're clear”

Along the corridors of the *Enterprise*, Kirk ran, opening doors that led down to Engineering as he did so.

He didn’t quite know how he got here, he just knew the ship needed saving.

Leaving the nexus had opened his mind to all of the events that had unfolded outside of it, the Klingon attack, Soran's plan, the warp core breach, he understood all of it.

Picard was on Veridian III, there was no way he could be in two places at once and avert double tragedy.

It was as if fate, the universe, the nexus, time, whichever one would like to lend the credit to, had put them both in the right places, it just fell on the both of them do what was necessary to win the day.

.

Kirk climbed down into the burning engineering room and opened a large panel wall.

He quickly began to re-route cabling and circuitry.

He was no engineer, but he knew a dear friend who was, the same friend who's memory had spurred him to take on this herculean 24th century task, Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott.

Through his days serving Kirk during his days as the *Enterprise* Captain, Scotty had taught him one or two things about warp core stabilization that, unbeknownst to him, they didn't teach much anymore at the academy, due to the risk factor.

Kirk was always good with risk.

He worked furiously at the controls, when he was at last door; he slammed the wall panel closed.

Kirk finished working and slammed the wall panel closed. He patched through to the bridge on his com badge.

"That's it. Go!" he said.

"Mister Worf, who was that?" Riker asked.

"I do not know, but the coolant leaks have subsided"

"Core breach averted" confirmed Data.

"I don't know who you are mister, but you've just saved the Enterprise" Riker continued.

"Twenty-fourth century isn't so tough" said Kirk.

Riker turned to Worf, confused, he raised a curious eyebrow.

"We'll talk later. Deana, disengage saucer separation, Mr. Data, initiate the ionic pulse"

Lursa, savouring she and her sister's imminent victory, barked out orders to her navigator.

"Target their Bridge. Full disruptors"

The Navigator suddenly reacted to something on his console.

“We are cloaking!”

Lursa was filled with sudden, sinking dread.

“What?”

“Our shields are down” he confirmed.

The ship begins shimmering as it engaged its cloak.

On board the Enterprise, Riker uttered a fateful command.

“Mr. Worf, Fire!”

Lursa and B'Etor reacted to the sight on the view screen as the spread of torpedoes fired from the *Enterprise* headed directly for them.

The two sisters exchanged a knowing look. This was the end, and neither were prepared

The ship was suddenly rocked hard and the ship swiftly, completely destroyed. Pieces of the shattered vessel floated past the *Enterprise*.

Data punched the air excitedly as the crew viewed all of this.

“Yes!” he exclaimed.

***

On the surface of Veridian III, Picard rushed over to the probe launcher, stepping onto the control platform and desperately began trying to shut down the launcher.

Picard worked the control panel, trying to make sense of it all, it wouldn’t respond.

The control panel was bizarre and confusing, many different screens and
alien graphics, the countdown graphics continued to race by.

The distant energy ribbon could be seen getting closer...

Picard looked helplessly at the control panel. Nothing he did had any effect. He kept hitting buttons...looking for other control panels, anything to affect the launcher.

Suddenly, Picard touches one particular control and the screen changed to an image of the Veridian sun, held in the centre of the alien cross-hair.

Picard went back to working on the controls.

The probe was suddenly launched in a roar of flame.

Soran froze. His eyes followed the probe as it arced into the sky. The two men watched the probe as it headed toward the sun...

The probe made a sweeping turn to the right and arced back down toward the planet.

Soran watched in horror as the probe crashed harmlessly into the distant jungle. There was a muffled explosion, and then silence.

Soran couldn't believe his dreams have been shattered. He looked into the sky and sees the distant ribbon streaking.

The disruptor fell from his hand as he rushed to the top of the scaffolding.

Soran was standing on the rock ledge. He reached up toward the sky as if trying to grab the Ribbon with his bare hands...but the ribbon passed by and disappears.

"No..." Soran whispered, realizing the full scale of his lost opportunity. His look of shock turned to fury and madness.

He turned to Picard.

"YOU!!"

Soran jumped down a few levels and then dove off the scaffolding at Picard, but Picard was quicker.

He grabbed the disruptor and fired, the blast catching Soran in mid-air.

Soran dropped to the ground a short distance away. Dead.

Picard stood over Soran's body, repulsed by his actions.

There should have been some other way, but Soran was one with his Nexus, his obsession had taken him far beyond the edge of reason.

Still, the loss of any life greatly pained Picard, who had been consumed by the raw, unfathomable anguish of death in the past few days.

He hadn't had time to reflect, to grieve the loss of his brother and nephew, and now he had Soran's demise at his hand adding to that misery.

Picard made the decision there and then, that he would make the time.

He buried Soran under a pillar of rocks and placed his Starfleet com badge on top of it. From there,

Picard stood alone, his head lowered, his eyes closed, grieving for Soran and sympathetic to his plight if not his methods, while also thinking back to the days spent with his brother in their golden years, laughing and weeping on the inside.

If only Soran could have seen that you did not need the nexus to experience the same comfort and joy the depths of the human memory could provide.

Everything sleeps in the mind, and when it is time to revisit them, they come to life again so vividly, with absolute splendour, and they remind us to cherish every moment, for they may never come again.

Time was no predator, it was a companion.

And on days like these, it made for splendid company.

***

Later that day, Kirk grabbed his horse, swung up onto his saddle, and rode out of the barn, filled with excitement.

He rode the horse hard over the sweeping countryside, across a stream, through a thicket of trees, and finally onto a rolling plain.

There was a large ravine ahead, Kirk saw it and smiled tightly.

He spurred the horse faster towards the ravine, the horse tearing along. It came up to the edge of the precipice and made a daring leap to the other side.

Horse and rider landed together, Kirk spurred the horse further on.

But, as he rode, a change came over him, a look of doubt crossed his face, something was not right.

He slowed the horse to a trot, and then brought it to a complete stop.

He sat there for a moment and frowned; he turned and looked back to the ravine, which was now a fair distance away. Something about the jump was nagging at him.

He turned his horse around and dug in his heels. The horse broke into a gallop, racing back towards the ravine.

Kirk gripped the reins tight in his hands and then the horse made the leap across yet again.

This time, when Kirk landed, he brought the horse to an immediate stop.

He could now tell something was seriously wrong.

He turned and stared at the ravine with a mixture of shock and sadness on his face.

In the distance, another rider, Picard, approached on a horse of his own, he stopped next to Kirk.

There was a long quiet moment as the two men sat there side by side; Kirk was introspective as he sorted out his feelings.

“I must have made that jump over fifty times, scared the hell out of me every time, but not this time…because it isn’t real”

Kirk turned around and looked towards a particular hill in the distance, shading his eyes against the bright sun.

He and Picard could make out the figure of a woman walking her horse.

“Antonia?” Picard asked.

“She isn’t real either is she? Neither am I. None of this matters” Kirk replied, all of the euphoria now leaving his body.

In this moment of self revelation, he glanced around.

“Maybe it’s not about that empty house, maybe it’s about that empty chair on the bridge of the Enterprise. Ever since I left Starfleet, I haven’t made a difference” he said.

Kirk took a beat, and then looked at Picard; a flash of private inspiration rekindled his enthusiasm.

“Captain of the Enterprise?” he asked.

“That’s right” Picard answered, formerly identifying himself,

There was now a passion and fervour in Kirk that Picard hadn’t fully glimpsed until now.

“Sounds like fun”

The two Captains face off against each other for a moment; Picard gave him a direct look, a glint of resolve and determination.

The two men turned and began to ride back, away from Antonia and the ravine, away from doubt and uncertainty.

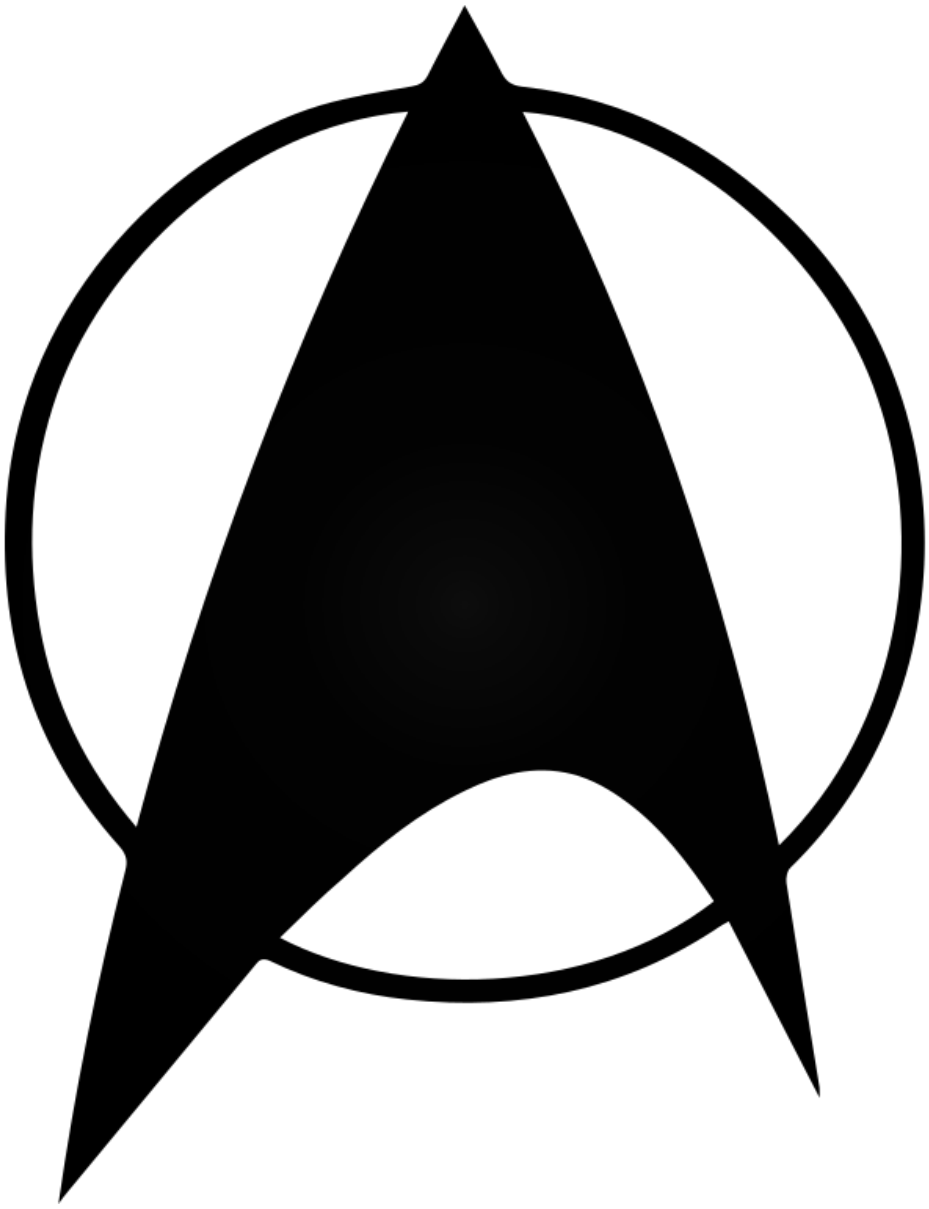
Picard had come here to relax and reflect, to get away from clouded thoughts and days marred by an ever increasing number of problems, but Kirk’s words had reminded him just what his duty was, and he needed to return to it.

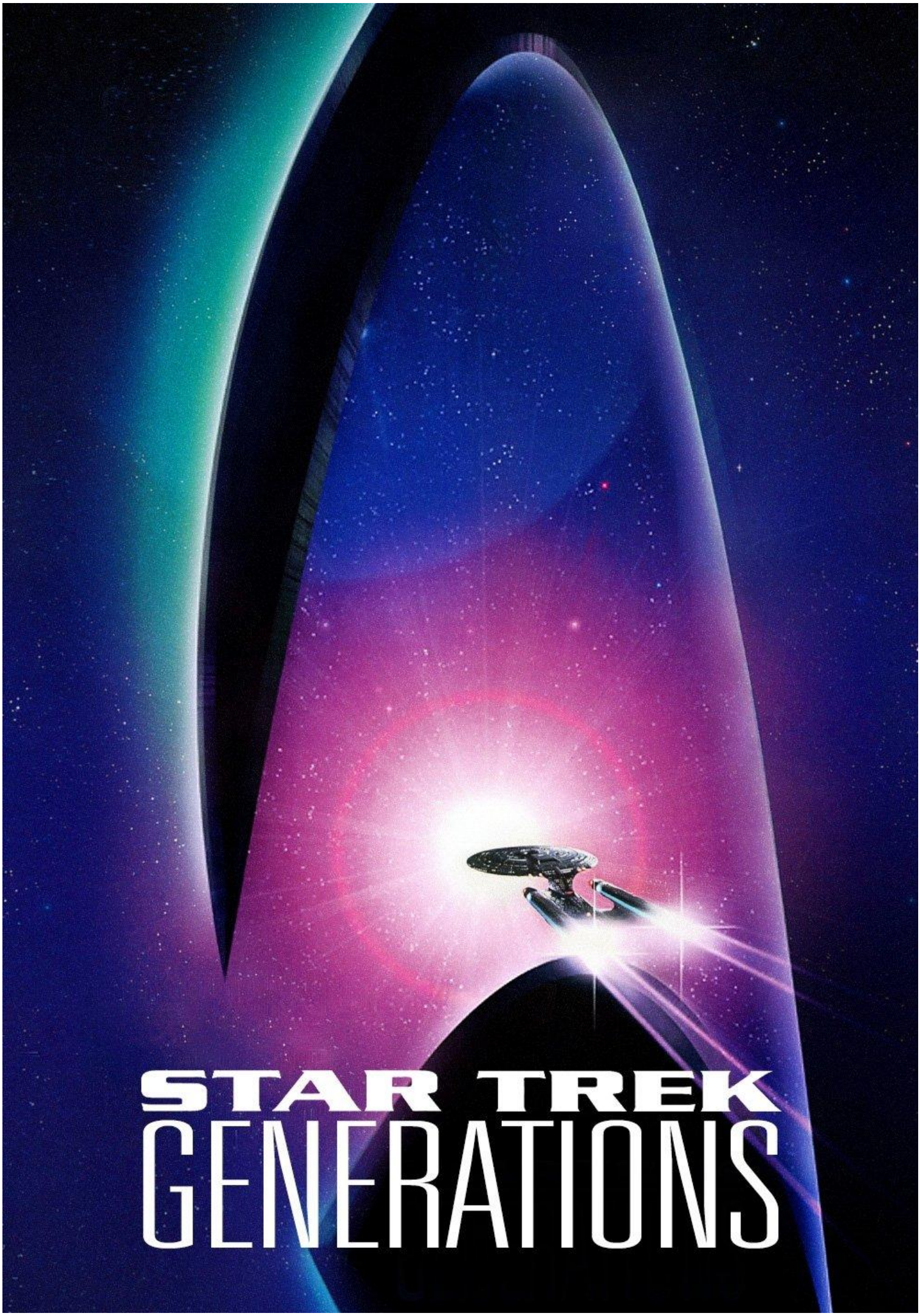
“Computer, exit” Picard instructed, the arch of the holodeck opening before him with a white hot shimmer.

As they disembarked from their horses and entered the doors that led back to the decks of the Starship *Enterprise,* Picard turned back to Kirk.

“Good luck Captain” he said.

“Call me Jim” Kirk replied.




STAR TREK
GENERATIONS